

Reflection Paper: GEAR UP

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### **Social Justice Takeaways**

In the realm of health and human services, it's known that talking about social justice is a necessity of our future positions in this field of work. People do not choose to work in this field because they would like to be making a lot of money, they choose it because they would like to have a positive impact on the world. In the Junior Field Practice Seminar Course at California State University, Monterey Bay, students prepare for all of the social justice work that they will be doing in the future. Social justice isn't something that is commonly talked about unless people are passionate about it. It would be less likely that a class of biology students be talking about microaggressions, discrimination and race (unless they were talking about genetics). This class gave the students the opportunity to talk more about social justice, what it means in society, what it means in this realm of work, and what it means to them individually. One of the activities that fostered these conversations was the "Social Justice Fishbowl." For this assignment, students had to write a reflection before the class session and come in ready to discuss their feelings based on the questions asked. Through the questions and deep reflections of each student, peers were able to talk about times when they had been treated unjustly, how they have advocated for others when treated unjustly, social identity, serving and privileges. Advocacy is a big component of social justice because without it, marginalized people are not being represented. It can also be very important who is advocating because if someone who doesn't understand that struggle as much is trying to advocate, they might not be the best representation, or voice, of that struggle. Finding the right person to represent those social justice issues also means finding a person who is wanting to serve that population and not fix it. Serving is when a representative is seen as equal and is speaking on behalf of the marginalized instead of speaking for them. This is

something that is often hard to consider when thinking about social justice. For instance, just because someone is Latino, they might not be the best person to represent all latinos if they cannot relate with a lot of the main struggles that that those ethnic groups face. They cannot just work to fix, the problem, they must identify and be compassionate towards working for that change. If they don't understand all of the struggle that the group has faced, they should do their best to be empathetic and understand the problem from the perspective of the marginalized.

### **Social Justice and Equity and GEAR UP**

GEAR UP is a “federal college readiness program funded by the Department of Education that aims to increase the number of students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education” (Walker, L. , 2018, personal communication). At Seaside High School and Seaside Middle School, this organization allows all students to receive support. Although all students are able to receive services, the organization recognizes that there are diverse students who come from various backgrounds. The way that the program recognizes adversity is by attempting to be equitable and provide resources for everyone. For example, they know that a very large population at these schools identifies as Hispanic or Latino. To help meet those needs, they try to provide as much information in English and Spanish so that no family or student is excluded from resources to be college ready. This program also recognizes that many of the students who they will be helping are the first generation in the family to be attending college. Because this is a fact for the organization, they do their best to provide information and help when applying to college and information about support services while they are in college. As mentioned earlier, these resources are still available for the entire student population and information is readily available in the Career and Advising Center of the schools. Students can

go in at any moment to receive this assistance, but the program understands that some of these students might not be as proactive. Some of these students may have never considered going to college because of stereotypes that Latinos nor Black students go to college. That is why this program does not wait for those students to approach them. They outreach to try and get all of the students to at least know about the services that are provided and available for them. Many of the people who work for this organization were first generation students who understood how difficult it was to get to college. They are doing this job because they want to help serve those students just like how they were served when they were in high school and college. They want all of those students to be successful. They understand the societal pressures and the stereotypes that are given to these students. The GEAR UP staff wants to help change those narratives and create positive futures for those students.

### **Community Building**

One way that his program could help promote social justice is by making the students more aware of those pressures, prejudice and stereotypes that are placed on those students. If they are more aware of this, they may want to be more involved in changing that for the future. It's very important to note that these students should be aware that college isn't the only choice. They can attend technical schools, they can search for careers instead of jobs. There are options to help better their future. They need to know that they are capable of all of those things. Thankfully, GEAR UP has been aiming towards teaching this to students through advising meetings. These meetings start as early as 7th grade. By implementing the idea that they are capable of many things at an early age, they are more aware of what they need to do in order to meet those dreams. These advising meetings usually take place with either a professional GEAR

UP staff or an Intern at the organization. In these meetings, the advisors usually focus on what the student wants to do after they graduate from high school. These conversations are extremely important, but in these meetings, the idea of social justice is never really addressed. It could be a good idea to start conversations about how they can help address injustices when they are in university and before attending. For example, maybe in some of their classes, there could be a student panel of college students that talk about their experience on how they got to college and the challenges they faced in college. This could also include people who went to technical school. Imagine a room where college students are talking about how they are changing the narrative. An undocumented student finishing their college degree, a black student who isn't in a gang, a Latina girl who didn't get pregnant. This could help be motivators for those students, especially in a time where the political climate is very intense.

### **Timesheet and Scope of Work Analysis**

Many of the tasks listed on the field learning plan in the appendix have been completed throughout the semester. Weekly supervision and meetings with the primary mentor, Laurencia, and secondary mentors, Ruth and Chloe, have been a pivotal part of the process of learning more about the organization and becoming familiar with procedures. Each mentor focused on different things that interns needed to complete and focus on. Ruth was introducing parenting programs and information management. To be able to enter more information, learn cross cultural competence and advocacy, Chloe was focused on developing strong advisors for 8th grade students. Laurencia brought the entire group together and ensured that GEAR UP was a positive space for interns and ensuring that learning requirements were being met. For the work that needed to be completed as an advisor to students, it was necessary to be able to identify key

administrators and staff at all school sites. This goal was only met slightly. At this point, it is easier to identify key people by sight and recognition, but still a bit difficult to remember the names of those administrators. Working with the students, it was also very necessary to be able to know the important dates of events and testings for students. These dates have become engraved in everyones brains because the information is located all over on flyers, emails, and phone calls to parents. Although many of the goals listed in the appendix were met, there were still other goals that could be enforced more during the next upcoming months at the internship. Those goals include: understanding the positive behavioral intervention and support process and reviewing the schools Local Control Accountability Plan and identifying how that aligns with GEAR UP's mission.

References

Walker, L. (2018, March). GEAR UP Intern Support Guide [Interview].

## Appendix

**Field Learning Plan**

The field learning plan displayed below is created by students during the first two weeks at their internship. This is a learning plan that was created specifically for GEAR UP at Seaside High and Middle School. The purpose of this plan is to help develop professional skills while also meeting the Major Learning Outcomes of the Collaborative Health and Human Services major.

<b>Planned Learning Activities/Assignments</b>	<b>Supporting Staff (Optional)</b>	<b>Timeline/Dates (Optional)</b>	<b>MLO(s) Addressed - Abbreviated</b>
Supervision with primary mentor	Laurencia Walker - Primary Mentor	Weekly Time/Day TBD	PC, PD, COL
Supervision with secondary mentor	Ruth Harrison - Secondary Mentor	Ongoing.	PC, PD, COL
Meeting with mentor about agency presentation	Laurencia Walker	By April 1st. Time TBD	COL, LED, PC, PD, IM,
Final evaluation and timesheet	Laurencia Walker	By May 8th time TBD	PD, PC, LED, IM, COL
Be able to identify key school administrations, counselors, and staff	Laurencia Walker and Ruth Harrison	By Friday, March 9th	COL, PC, CR, PD
Review Seaside HS/Seaside MS and identify when GEAR UP events are scheduled	Laurencia Walker and Ruth Harrison	By Friday, March 9th	IM, PC, PD, SM
Identify important test dates for Spring 2017 and Academic year 2017-18	Laurencia Walker and Ruth Harrison	By Friday, March 9th	IM, PC, PD, SM
Understand the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports Process	Laurencia Walker and Ruth Harrison	By Friday, March 23rd	CR, CCC, KHHS, PPA, PE
Review the school's Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) and identify areas that align with GEAR UP	Laurencia Walker and Ruth Harrison	By Friday, March 23rd	IM, PD, STAT, SM